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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 006148

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TAGS: PREL PHUM IN

SUBJECT: MEA HINTS AT COY INDIAN SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

REF: A. STATE 140192

1B. NEW DELHI 3973

Classified By: PolCouns Geoff Pyatt for reasons 1.4 (B, D)

¶1. (C) PolCouns delivered Ref A points on July 29 to MEA Joint Secretaries Hamid Ali Rao (UN Political) and Manjeev Puri (UN Economic and Social). In a follow-up meeting with Puri on August 8, the Joint Secretary assured us that the US shouldn't worry about the Human Rights Council (HRC), as he assumed that the US-backed version would be passed. All the drafts of the outcome document have included proposals for an HRC that mirrors US goals, he emphasized.

A Couple of Differences, But We'll Go Along

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¶2. (C) The GOI agrees with the US position on the thematic issues related to human rights actions in the UN, Puri said. However, there are two areas of divergence. First, while the US favors targeting individual countries, India has always opposed this. India finds that it is easier to right wrongs through encouragement rather than shaming, Puri explained. Second, India believes we should set the bar very high for any criteria disqualifying a country to sit on the HRC. There should be something equivalent to a "felony conviction" before disqualifying a country, Puri argued, adding that just as the US had lost an election to the CHR once, it too could find itself on the wrong side of a simple vote to disqualify. The UN should have something more concrete than a sentiment that the country is a "bad guy." Pressed on this point, Puri agreed that a regime like the Taliban is clearly outside the pale, and should not participate in a body like the HRC. He added his understanding that the UN Charter already provides for suspension of a member whose conduct is egregious.

¶3. (C) After PolCouns reminded Puri of Ambassador Tahir-Kheli's comments that India could advance its UNSC cause by partnering with the US on issues like the HRC, Puri reassured us that India "would not be a spoiler" in establishing the HRC. However, in order to maintain its credibility in the NAM and keep support for its UNSC bid, India could not jump on the bandwagon right away with the US. In the meantime, he continued, India was helping "in a big way" on issues like the Peace Building Commission.

Comment: Let's Talk More to India

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¶4. (C) Puri's puzzlement at our concern about India's level of support for the proposed HRC is an indication of the extent to which New Delhi is actually backing many of our most important priorities for UN reform, even if Indian attention remains focused on Security Council expansion. We need to engage India earlier and more broadly on UN reform issues such as the HRC, in New York and elsewhere, recognizing that the public posture India presents to its NAM partners may not reflect actual GOI intentions.

BLAKE